



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Massachusetts State Office**

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[www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov)

# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Federal program available to help Massachusetts landowners improve wildlife habitat**

### **Summer is a good time for habitat assessment**

AMHERST, MA— Massachusetts landowners who would like to protect or restore valuable ecosystems and wildlife habitat on their property may be eligible for technical and cost-share assistance to install conservation practices through the federal Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

Through the WHIP program, landowners may receive up to 75 percent of installation costs for conservation practices. WHIP was authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill and is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

According to Massachusetts WHIP program manager Beth Schreier, summer is the best time to assess wildlife habitat. "Now would be a good time for landowners to contact their local NRCS office for assistance in assessing habitat on their property," said Schreier. "Plant identification, for example, is much easier at this time of year when things are growing and there's no snow cover."

Interested landowners should contact their local NRCS field office at a USDA service center for more information. USDA service centers are listed on-line at <http://offices.usda.gov> or in the phone book under Federal Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture. General program information is available on the NRCS Massachusetts website at [www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov).

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Eligible lands include privately owned land and occasionally state and local government land. Target areas in Massachusetts include early successional habitats (grasslands, shrub lands, and young forest), freshwater wetlands, upland oak forest, pitch pine/scrub oak habitat, coastal habitats, and rivers and streams. Examples of conservation practices eligible for WHIP cost-share funding include early successional habitat development and management, projects enhancing fish passage, wetland restoration and riparian buffer establishment.

“NRCS conservationists are available in offices across the state to help Massachusetts landowners to develop and implement a conservation plan,” said State Conservationist Cecil B. Currin. “USDA remains committed to providing conservation tools and resources to ensure that Bay State land remains healthy and productive.”

NRCS has seven Massachusetts field offices in Greenfield, Hadley, Holden, Hyannis, Pittsfield, Westford, and West Wareham, which work with local conservation districts and other partners to serve farmers and landowners throughout the commonwealth.

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#### **NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS:**

If you would like to include local contact information for your readers, please use the office below that serves your area. Also, for background and story ideas, examples of past WHIP projects and other NRCS conservation work are available on-line at <http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/news/showcase.html>.

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